

# ***SEFER***



**1998**

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# *Sefer 1998*

According to the Analytical Concordance to the Bible, the word “sefer” is taken from the Hebrew and means “writing” or “book.”

## Stopping by a Convenience Store on a Humid Evening

“Buy me a Coke.”

Is love a code of ethics, cut into an obelisk,  
scribbled in a study booth at the public library;  
does one find it in a gilded pavilion decked with a pennant,  
a credo,  
a memorable coat of arms?  
(Or is it, as I`m often told, a last minute change of plans?)

The status quo of every ritual--  
like spotting the driver five dollars and a box of  
Lemonheads--  
is deceptively taut, surprisingly white at the edges  
where the skin is stretched thin.

In floodlights that reek of efficient newness:  
bright, greaseless, plastic,  
wiper fluid, air fresheners, squeegees,  
A Member of the Universe bothers with  
the “no-no question” and balks,  
fumbling at the checkout counter,  
the heavy-ankled lazy cashier provoked  
into rote suspicion

And someone, surveying the  
cement lot while rolling down the window for some  
brackish, tepid air,  
grows very uneasy in the passenger seat thinking,  
“This is it. This is all.”

Amanda Ash

## **Song of the Drum**

Song of the drum  
Tells an age old story  
Sings a song of history in the making  
Listen to the beat  
Sounds like the running of slaves feet  
Escaping captivity  
Running toward freedom

Song of the drum  
Tells an age old story  
Sings the song of history in the making  
Listen to the beat  
Sounds like an old jazz band in Harlem  
Escaping daily lives  
Running toward freedom

Song of the drum  
Tells an age old story  
Sings the song of history in the making  
Sounds like the walls of apartheid crashing down  
Escaping separation of color  
Running towards freedom

Song of the drum  
Tells an age old story  
Sings the song of history in the making  
Listen to the beat  
Pounding outside my window pane

The rain shows the tears  
Of those who fought for years  
To bring you freedom  
Listen to the rain  
Listen to it sing  
You will be amazed at what you hear it say

Allison Burns

## ode to the modeling industry

every time i wake up  
i hear you call me fat  
i see you watch my every move  
i smell the odor of your rage  
i taste nothing.  
i feel a pain you will never understand.

i do not accept this body  
i do not like it when you watch me.  
i am self-conscious enough without the pain you inflict upon me.  
i am the cause of my own heartache  
i will not ever understand why . . .  
why i hurt . . .  
    why you push  
    why i lie . . .  
    why you hate  
    why i steal . . .  
    why you take.  
you have taken everything away every time i wake up.

Valerie A. Clemens



## Choices Made

It is amazing how a person can live for so long  
and avoid all sorts of trouble  
Until an out of place rock gets in the way  
and forces him to stumble.

I have lost so many friends and family  
to either a jail or to death,  
That when my peers run into a problem  
I seldomly give my opinion to avoid  
wasting my breath.

Haven't you ever felt so close to success  
that your tongue was starting to taste it?  
Well you should also know that within 10 seconds of anger  
a whole career and a life can be wasted.

People need to think before they act—  
talk out their situation.  
It might prove better in the long run  
to have avoided that confrontation.

I can't exactly say that I am pure and innocent  
because I have contributed my share of heartache.  
But now I have opened my eyes to see what could happen  
and I think that the pain would be less  
if I was stabbed in the heart with a stake.

Four hundred thirty-nine years of oppression overcome  
One of the greatest men to ever live assassinated  
for our rights  
Is it time for us to make a change!  
I am tired of wondering if I will live through another  
night.

Cherish every minute you spend with your companions  
whether they live inside or outside your home.  
Because within the blink of an eye, or the flicker of a light,  
you might turn around and your companion  
just might be gone.

dedicated to Brian Taylor C/C '95

P. J. Foster

## **Making Concessions**

From your frozen envelope I remember well  
What you told me--all the hands and scribbled calculations  
But the days did not rise up to greet me--do not  
My eyelids make concessions for the tight-lipped skin of day  
Where the sun has turned to an eggy smear  
Boiling in its bloody broth  
To melt beneath the telephone poles,  
Off to sleep in its bed of bones.

Shelley Romein

## Standing in the Rain

*Things sure had changed since I got to 'Nam. Life at home was, well, life. Even thoughts of everyday occurrences warmed the heart, at least for a brief moment. Now my world has turned completely around, like a horrible nightmare . . .*

I woke with a start and looked wildly about, body tense from an adrenaline rush. "Easy, brother. You're all right . . ." Simeon reached across and squeezed my shoulder. I looked over at him, greeted by a comforting smile. Calming down almost instantly, I took a look around camp. Ross was asleep next to me. I admired him. Most of us couldn't sleep, or didn't dare to, but Ross didn't seem to have any problems. Some said he must've wanted to go in his sleep. Johnson was checking his .50 cal. machine gun, again. Rodriguez and Velasquez were playing cards by flashlight. "Kill the light, Rod, you're screwing up my night vision!" Hobbes was kind of paranoid, but so was everyone. He just showed it. "He's right, Rod—you could give away our position . . ." Sgt. Mackenzie was calm as always. Probably why he stuck around long enough to gain rank. Never lost his head in a firefight. It was cold, but he wouldn't let us keep a small fire going. Rod had complained once, but Sarge said, "it's better to be cold, stiff and alive, than cold and stiff." I think everyone's come to accept the grim life of a GI, whether they wanted to or not.

Funny, everyone had a pack of cigarettes attached to their helmet, except Simeon. He had a pocket copy of the New Testament, and "1 Cor. 16:13" inked across the front. We became friends right from the start. There was something about him that comforted me and drained all my fear and loneliness. He was an African, orphaned as a boy in Zaire, adopted by a missionary, and brought back to the States for schooling. He was extremely intelligent. Could've escaped the draft by going to law or med school . . . or even seminary, but chose not to. Said he believed God wanted him right where he was. That was hard to believe, but seeing the unquenchable fire in his eyes, I knew he was convinced. He talked to us often about his new "life" as a Christian. Some refused to even listen to him, but I was fascinated. He told us life here on earth was 'as transient as the morning mist compared to the eternal life awaiting in heaven.' I tried to comprehend that for half the night, and it blew my mind. But I did

know that I wanted it. He told me all I had to do to receive this “gift” was ask Jesus to be my personal “Lord and Savior” and ask to be forgiven and cleansed of my sins. That was it. That was my ticket to paradise.

I knew God had to be real. Only the ignorant refused to believe an omnipotent Creator existed. I looked up to see the black clouds rolling overhead, blocking out the stars and the moon. *We* were real. *We* were something. And something obviously can’t come from nothing. I knew if all this could be created by a command, in the twinkling of an eye, that Heaven could exist. Man couldn’t possibly get there on his own. Sin keeps us from Heaven, but Simeon quoted often, “though your sins are like scarlet, they will be *white as snow*.” That’s why Jesus had come, right? Kind of like a persistent real estate agent, offering an invitation to *anyone* who would follow him there. I was captivated.

That night I prayed for the first time. I asked for forgiveness and committed myself as a follower of Jesus. When I had finished, I raised my head and looked around. Johnson was still fiddling with his .50 cal. Ross was still asleep. It was still cold. Nothing had changed. Or had it? No, wait . . . *I* had changed! It felt as if a tremendous burden had been lifted off my shoulders. It took me a second to realize what had just taken place. The hair stood up on my neck and arms. Suddenly, I felt filled with peace, passion, joyfulness, energy . . . Life . . .

The rain began to fall, slow at first, then developing into a downpour. Everyone got up and ran to their packs to dig out their raingear, cursing at the weather. I stood up, but didn’t move, holding out my arms and looking up into the darkness. The rain soaked me thoroughly. Mackenzie looked at me like I was crazy. But I didn’t care. It wasn’t long before I was standing in a puddle. A scarlet puddle? Emotion swelled up inside of me and I began to cry, not tears of sadness, but big, fat tears of joy. I looked down to see Simeon gazing up at me. A smile spread across his face when I looked into his eyes. He *knew*. Then he got up, draped his poncho over me, and we ran like mad towards the rocky overhang where the rest of the platoon were huddled. -- *John 3:16*

Greg Hiser

## Autumn

These years have blown by like leaves,  
twirling out of control, floating in beautiful flight.

Each leaf precious, valuable to the beholder,  
with its own memory to instruct and delight.

Memories full of warmth and kindness,  
thoughts that feed the fires of this endless story.

Branches that continue to grow upwards  
even after it's past its morning glories.

But one leaf's flight will remind the seasons  
of the short time that was the Fall.

That time of blossomed love in full bloom,  
the love that kept none and gave all.

Times that find themselves in pain.

Wounds that are washed in dirt and rain.

Christopher Edge

## **Silent Torment**

I am with her, and I wonder.  
Her face before my eyes,  
her hand in mine,  
making imprints in the sand as we lie.

We look up at the glitter God tossed in the sky,  
not speaking a word, for words mean little.  
But with each smile she releases,  
she gains more pieces to the puzzle of my heart.  
But I am aware she may leave it in pieces,  
finishing not what she starts.

I lie next to her, and I wonder.  
I wonder if she's lying.

**Andrew Bell**

**Picture: Beautiful You**  
Anna Kareiva





## **Cars**

Cars  
Whiz by  
On a maze  
Of freeways  
The glibness  
Of the phrase  
“A short drive away”  
Is apparent as  
People zip along  
Interstates  
Leading nowhere  
If you cannot  
Drive.

Jennifer Parker

## **Bunny in the Bleak Late Afternoon**

He finds himself counting pieces of litter in  
the parking lot, then he tallies the number of  
oil spots in the adjacent spaces;  
in the stubby field, soccer happens.  
His belly full of every sort of nothing, he stands  
in the light some yards from the building and  
in a mockery of vertigo the world wobbles along.

Bunny knows that Life is reeling, is the  
track team (sun worshippers, flaxen haired) pounding over  
the commuter parking area--

It is a pale computer science major eating  
corn chips, scrabbling around for notecards  
in a blue Ford, drooping muffler, a dummy tire  
on the back right side.

Bunny watches crows gather under a pine tree;  
He is alone only halfway on purpose.

As voices pepper the chill tension of the  
weather and hang ringingly in the air above the causeway,  
he can only pick at sleeve buttons over one skinny wrist  
and think about how forced the sky seems:  
no reasonable configuration of colors,  
no depth  
only the flat, sterile sense of cement walls,  
dingy newsprint, winter grass.  
Bunny blinks at the whiteness of the light,  
shoves his hands in his pockets, vexed with himself,  
and wonders quietly about the time.

Amanda Ash

**The Death of Mr. Black**  
**(In memory of Alex Black)**

Beneath the hard light he dragged the razor slowly  
Down his sallow face.  
The walls outside the bathroom echoed,  
Flickered with the silent images the T.V. spit back.

The children would soon be back.  
He imagined their moist, stubby hands—  
The soft squeak as they would turn the doorknob.  
But no--he had made sure  
That it would not be them that found him.

In seventeen minutes his shadow would sway  
Softly on the stairs  
Above and below the endless rooms  
Rooms that held people he had never spoken to  
Who now dozed off in the late afternoon  
As commercials for orange juice and oven cleaners  
Sifted through their dreams.

Shelley Romein

**This is a Poem About Poetry  
(Do Not Call 911)**

Your words, somehow  
Water arid thoughts --  
    And this river flows

~~~~~

Forced from stagnation  
    (Still, stark death)

Thank you.

All the same,  
    I prefer death.

Sherry Yearty

**Picture: Hidden**  
Justin Strang



Justin  
STRANG

## The Last Flight Out

My mother left East Germany in August of 1961. Unbeknownst to her, she was on the last flight out of this country, fleeing not from a country ready to lock her behind its wall, but ironically from the kind of prison created by abusive spouses.

This article is not just about my life and the life of my mother. It is also about the lives of so many countless others who were affected by the erection of the Berlin Wall. To some perhaps, the Berlin Wall was nothing more than a structure made of brick and mortar. To me, however, the Berlin Wall stands for losses experienced and gains made in life. Personal losses because I never had the pleasure of meeting my extended family. Gains made in that I am indeed free: free to pursue a life of constitutional guarantees, of the freedom of speech; the right to practice the religion of my choice; the right to due process of law. To others, the Berlin Wall was a highly visible symbol of the Cold War, of the post-1945 struggle between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and its allies, including East Germany, and the United States.

I was born in January of 1961 in East Germany. At the time of my birth, the city of Berlin was still one city, though it was in the midst of undergoing some powerful changes to its political structure and its outer boundaries. By the time I was about 8 months old, events in my mother's life forced her to flee her home in Halle/ Saale, a town located east of Berlin.

Some twenty-four years later my mother told me the story about the events leading up to her flight from her home. As she was relating her flight from East Germany, she blew out a sigh.

"I just had to get away from him. You know, Hans-Dieter."

She was referring to her spouse; the man who for their entire marriage beat her every day, cheated on her and then taunted her with his affairs.

"I think he killed Ronald," she whispered.

Ronald was my older brother, dead before my birth, under suspicious circumstances. Her eyes anxiously searched my face as she continued. Tears choked up her next words.

"I was scared to run but even more scared to stay. Then came that day in August. He came home from the bar that night all drunk

and mean angry. He told me it was my fault that his girlfriend broke up with him. Because he was married with two kids.”

She stopped speaking and looked around the room. Her eyes came to rest on me, then looked at the floor.

“That night I got the worst beating ever. He was like crazy out of control. He kept hitting and hitting me. But that wasn’t enough, oh no!” Her voice shook. “Mario started to cry because of all the noise.”

Mario is my other brother, older by three years, and not the son of Hans-Dieter.

I did not want to hear this. I wanted to run from the room, yet my feet couldn’t move. I knew what was coming next. I looked at my mom. She looked so tiny and helpless. I wanted to hug her, keep her safe. I walked over to her, but she put up a hand stopping me and continued speaking in that voice of emotional detachment used by people who are telling a particularly traumatic incident.

“He went over to Mario and grabbed him by the front of the sleeper. I ran over to stop him. He hit my baby. I tried to stop him, but he hit me. I fell down. Mario was screaming. He shook him like a rag doll. I got up and got hold of his shirtsleeve. He let go of Mario. But then he came after me again. Finally, he must’ve gotten tired of hitting me and calling me names. Later on that night, after he fell asleep, I took you and Mario, and we got on the next plane to wherever.”

She did not tell me at this time that he not only beat her and my brother, but that night before he fell asleep, he also raped her. She also did not tell me of the things he tried to do to me.

That same night, as a young woman was fleeing her home with two young children, the East German government decided to send its military to block any further exodus of its citizens to the free West. At the end of World War II, the city of Berlin was completely surrounded by territory occupied by Soviet forces. This territory officially became the country of East Germany in 1949. The city of Berlin itself was petitioned into East Berlin and West Berlin. West Berlin was occupied by British, French, and US forces and was supported by the Federal Republic of Germany, commonly known as West Germany. At least 2.7 million people fled East Germany between 1949 and the middle of 1961. More than half of these people used

West Berlin as their corridor to freedom.

Compared to other countries in Eastern Europe, East Germany was the most productive Communist nation between 1949 and 1961. Even though East Germans had limited access to West German media, they were aware that their standard of living was substantially lower than that of their counterparts in West Germany. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that many East Germans left the German Democratic Republic hoping to find better economic opportunities in the West.

By 1961, the year of my birth, the East German government had had quite enough of this flight to the West, since it was depleting the country's labor force, among other things. During the night of August 13, 1961, East German soldiers and members of the militia surrounded West Berlin with temporary fortifications that were rapidly replaced by a concrete wall, 4m (12ft) high and 166km (103 miles) long, of which 45km (28 miles) lay between two sides of the city. In those places, where the erection of the wall was not feasible, buildings were simply bricked up. The only openings in the wall were two closely guarded crossing points. Although the GDR announced that the wall was needed to prevent military aggression and political interference from West Germany, the East German government busily set to building tank traps and ditches along the eastern side of the wall, thereby suggesting that it was constructed to keep East German citizens in.

Between 1961 and 1989, a few East Germans souls brave enough to try managed to escape to West Berlin. Even though statistics are not clear, at least eighty people died trying to cross the border. Russia had built the wall of all walls--the Berlin Wall. By the time I was close to eight months old the last brick was cemented into place. The Berlin Wall was in the process of closing. No longer could Germans travel from East to West. Berlin was divided in half, with the West Germans and Americans on one side and the Russians and East Germans on the other. East Germany had become an occupied country in which there were no constitutional rights. There was no freedom of speech; no right to practice free religion; no right to peacefully assemble; no due process of law. East Germany was now fully under Communist rule. Its citizens were not allowed to leave the country and travel to the West. Internal travel was restricted as well. The old and



infirm were not only allowed, but encouraged to leave since they were considered a drain on East Germany's economy. The young and able had to stay, regardless of whether they had family in the West. Thousands of people tried to flee after the erection of The Wall, many died trying to reach the free West. Others were captured and incarcerated. Life in East Germany meant toeing the party line. One could not trust another. Family turned against itself in order to gain supposed favor from the East German government, making snitching a new, much coveted way of life. Others simply died of a broken heart because of the loss of a son, daughter, father, mother, husband, or wife.

I have never met my grandmother. I know I have an aunt and some nieces. I have never met them. They are in a country that existed behind a wall, far removed from my family and myself.

Since my mom had left in the dead of night without first obtaining a proper divorce or at least a marital separation, she did not have custody of me. Throughout my childhood in West Germany, I continually feared the appearance of the man who by law was my father. I realized early on that if he wanted to he could easily invoke his custodial rights and take me away from my mother, back to East Germany. I lived in daily fear of this. It frightened me enough to force me to make plans to leave Germany.

I immigrated to the US in January of 1980, and found that I could now breathe easier, for I was far removed from the grasp of anyone who would want to impede my search for freedom.

By 1985 the need to know my grandmother became too much, so I wrote her a letter. Since I was living in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, I felt secure enough to attempt to get in touch with her in East Germany. How foolish a thought that was. My husband, who was in the US Air Force, was immediately called in to see his supervisor, who proceeded to give him trouble about his subversive wife.

I was taken to the Office of Special Investigation on the Air Force Base, where OSI agents then grilled me for several hours, all the while waving my letter to my grandmother in front of my face. (The OSI had intercepted my letter, censored it, and made a copy, which they retained to show me that they had proof of my communist tendencies.) Meanwhile, the East Germans intercepted the same somewhat mutilated letter, censored it some more (there were not a

whole lot of words left on the one page I had written) and then sent it on to my grandmother with the clear threat that if she dared to contact me her life would become even more intolerable than it already had been. So much for my one try to get to know my family. The Iron Curtain proved itself to be made of just that – Iron. Disappointing as all this was, what bothered me more was the ludicrous reaction I experienced here in the USA. When I sent that letter, I never really expected it to get to my grandmother. After all, I knew what insanity drove the East Germans. But, what about the Americans? What motivated them to harass my husband and me?

Another event occurred in that same year. My mom came to the US for her first visit. We went everywhere. I showed her Myrtle Beach. I showed her the ocean. She had never seen a beach, never experienced walking barefoot through the soft sand. Her whole face lit up with pleasure as she laid her eyes on the beautiful white expanse of beach sand. Since she could hardly wait to get her feet free of her shoes, she just plopped down on the sand and hurriedly undid her shoelaces. Then she rushed to pull off her shoes, the socks coming off right along exposing too white skin. She dug her toes into the soft sand, sighing contently. Finally, she got up and we started off on our walk.

“I just love this,” she cried. “I wish I could stay here forever, like you.”

Contrary to what she was thinking, I don't like going to the beach much in the daytime. All I can see is the endlessness of the ocean, stretching to where it meets my home, Germany. I get homesick then, and I don't particularly like feeling homesick for a country that to me holds more heartache than joy.

One night, during her visit, I decided to rent a video, since the TV had nothing but its customary reruns to offer. The video I rented was *Tunnel 21*. The subject matter of the movie dealt with the erection of the Berlin Wall and those East Germans who did not want to be locked up behind it. It accurately depicted the repeated escape attempts of those people who could not stomach living in confinement, and used archive footage to illustrate the desolation and rage experienced by those people standing on the wrong side of the Wall at the time of its closing.

We sat down after supper to watch it. The first thirty minutes

or so it seemed my mom was bored. Her English is fairly good, but she does have a bit of a hard time understanding what is said on TV. The movie was not subtitled, and from the corner of my eye I saw her slowly starting to nod off, her head occasionally rolling forward and then sideways, as her neck muscles relaxed. Her eyes were fighting to stay open. Suddenly, she shot off the couch, gesticulating wildly at the TV. Startled, my heart furiously pounding in my throat, I felt a momentary spasm of terror. She was gibbering away in German and kept shaking her hand at the TV. I couldn't understand a word.

"Mona, stop die Kassette." She yelled.

I hit the stop button. "What's wrong?"

"On the tape. You got to see this. Rewind the tape. I'll show you."

I rewound the tape. Too far. She made me go forward a bit. Too far again. She was starting to get excited again. She snatched the remote from my hand and rewound the tape herself. The screen cleared. I saw a softly undulating sea of grayish faces staring at a brick wall. Even though the people staring were moving slightly, their facial expressions reminded me of the wide-eyed frozen terror mirrored in the eyes of a deer caught in the headlights of the poaching hunter's pick-up truck.

"There she is. There she is." Mom pointed at the TV screen. I looked at her in confusion, and beginning to feel slightly dumb.

"Look!" She marched up to the TV and in exasperation put her right index finger on a face like any other face on the screen. They all looked alike to me. Gray. Scared. Confused. Outraged. Lost. The sea of faces had gained a semblance of motility with all the different ranges of emotion displayed. I felt for them, yet they did not touch me. Until she explained.

"Mona, look, this woman. She is my mother." Her finger was resolutely fixed on the face of a woman. The woman's face was slightly turned to the side. Her hair was piled up in a bun on the back of her head. In profile she looked hard, her mouth tightly compressed, her broad face set in angry lines.

My mother's finger thumped insistently against the TV screen as she said each word loudly and distinctly. "This is your grandmother."

I looked hard at the TV. My grandmother? Here? On my TV?

In my living room in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina? No way! Yet, goose bumps raced up and down my spine. The hair on the back of my neck was standing up straight. I couldn't quit staring at the TV. My grandmother. I finally had seen my grandmother.

My mother did not stop talking about this incident for quite some time. She told everyone who would listen. She told them in German or in her broken English. She had not seen or heard from her mother in twenty-four years. After she returned to Germany, she made contact with her. By then, her mother was too old to be of any real use to the East Germans. So they let her visit my mother in the West. I would like to end this story on a happy note, but unfortunately I cannot. My mother and grandmother never reestablished their relationship. Too much time had passed. As I am writing this, I found out that my grandmother has died of colon cancer. Even after its destruction, the Berlin Wall has claimed another victim.

In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down. The East German people were free. Free to go where they wanted. Free to go find their families. Many experienced just what my mother and grandmother experienced. They could not reconnect with those they had not seen in so many years. Some West Germans actually resented what they considered the "freeloaders." I have spoken to Germans who have come to the US on visits, and the only sentiment I hear expressed is a common disgust with the people from the so-called East. The East Germans have had a hard time getting used to the way of life in the West. For instance, supermarkets in West Germany are quite similar to US supermarkets in that they offer a great many items to choose from. To the people from the East, these choices can be quite overwhelming. After having stood in long lines all their lives just to purchase coffee (one brand only), having to choose between Maxwell House, the store brand and other brands, can be an unsettling event. The West Germans also resented the East Germans because the West German government, in a well intentioned effort to ease the transition, ended up trying to do too much for those newly freed, now unified Germans.

The Berlin Wall did more than just divide a country for twenty-nine years. It separated loved ones. It killed its own in an attempt to keep them in captivity. It caused me to leave my own home in search of freedom. It denied me the right to meet and get to know my grandmother, my aunt and my nieces.

Even though it has been eight years since the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany, to me Germany will continue to be divided into East and West. The callous division of a country by the powers that were caused more harm than anyone could have envisioned. This much-hated symbol of confinement, captivity, and death has left an immutable imprint on my entire existence. Yet, upon reflection I realize that this imprint is not all bad, for it was the Berlin Wall, which has always motivated me to search for freedom – political as well as personal. Being born in East Germany has shaped my life more than I realized, for I have, albeit unconsciously, devoted my life to the pursuit of freedom from political persecution as well as the right to be myself.

Desdemona Jensen

## Empty Sand

Like a tiny speck of sand that journeyed to my floor,  
I danced into a lot of lives in search of completing myself;  
there was an empty space.

Then a cool breeze blèw the sand in my eyes, leaving me blind for  
a while.

Then I knew the sand had served its purpose.

I was blind when I could see, and when

I saw a part of me that only saw

external beauty I wasn't empty,

but angry.

Anna Kareiva

## **Bring Back Slavery**

She walks with a purpose,  
glaring straight into the sun.  
Refusing to blink for  
fear of misplacing her vision.  
Pacing herself to tire,  
she passes passersby  
and brushes past their walls.  
Her loose hairs fly  
as the wind picks up  
and tosses all debris into  
incongruent positions  
underneath her determined shoe.

She slows,  
looks, and  
turns her  
face into  
a fountain,  
a river,  
a waterfall.

Her heart collapses  
in her tortured hands,  
still reddened from  
lack of understanding.  
Half-empty with compassion  
and filling herself with petals,  
thorns and all.  
Robbed of her chain and  
anchor, she clings to air  
and runs her fingers  
through hateful freedom  
as the love of slavery lingers.

Christopher Edge

## **When I First**

When I first  
Judged your book by its cover  
The cover was beautiful--  
    And the pages were fluff.

Your fluff-pages often surprise me.

And sometime --  
    Sometimes they live down to my expectations.

## **Your Air**

Your Word passions--  
    Tighten innerness.

Thoughts travel  
    On your gaze  
        And interrupt  
            My in consequence.

Desire could live forever --  
    Breathing your air.

Sherry Yearty



**Along the Same Route Daily;  
First Week of August.**

All the dry and dingy streets are  
splayed out, red-bricked, dust-embraced.  
My footfalls in the taut mid-afternoon clap then  
fall away like minutes, seconds in self-effacing pace. . .  
All these streets I pass with my clipped stride,  
one rangy as the next, such lean-dog  
backwards cornered by limp sky,  
faded dresses in heat-mottled window fronts--  
My nose is prone to itch at the shabbiness.  
Each breath-held ThreeO`Clock stares blankly into  
naked angular shadows and flat light. I rub my palms  
over my forearms or touch my paper lips  
fearing I too may fade-- around the hems or  
perhaps, while watching specks of dust and gnats  
in some portal shafted sunbeam, feel my insides  
grow heated and empty, nothingly-- pausingly--  
no attempts at anything, no tepid good-byes.  
Every day piles around Late so that I repeat myself,  
walking, lunching, existing in a rhythm of abandon.  
Today, I blink in the whiteness of the light, remembering  
the simple soft fabric of something you were wont to wear.  
I cannot any longer be civil to strangers when,  
in the miasma of heat and recollections, I expect  
sunbursts to spill from any stalwart, close-mouthed doorway.

Amanda Ash

## Eyes of a Warrior

In the eyes of a warrior  
    one can find no fear,  
but the bravery and courage he needs  
    to protect his tribe that is near.

In the eyes of a warrior one can see  
    the honesty of his word,  
for being true to himself and his kin  
    is always what he prefers.

In my eyes you can find all these things  
    and also something more,  
You will see my love for the land and my love for God  
    from the highest of mountains, to the sandiest  
    of the shores.

P. J. Foster

## Molding Mirror

Why must the consistency of grudges  
stare at me through the reflections in the mirror I gaze upon?  
The face is pure, the eyes clear. Within myself the soul can be  
healed,  
strengthened, for He is in me to the close of the age.

The sun surely rises and a new day begins. I'm in total control;  
given a game piece expected to follow through making a move  
that leads to a dead end,  
or the finish line.

The image is truly not the barrier I'm gazing upon,  
but the fear I'm accepting that blocks the sunrise I'm missing.  
I'm in total control because of the people, places, and things that  
surround.  
They are there to corrupt, enhance, and change my existence.  
I don't end with them.

Forget.  
Do not mind the who, what, and wheres that haunt.  
Gazing at the surrounding mirror with grudges I no longer hold  
I make the mirror my only friend. I'm shaped by the past, but the  
mold hasn't set in.

Anna Kareiva

## **Excelsior!**

Excelsior! Excelsior! The spires touch the skies  
Always higher! Ever upward!  
The towers greet and then surpass the clouds  
Lofty pinnacles soar to immaterial heights  
Above pipes of rushing water, subways racing,  
Thundering through arching tunnels beside  
Cables crackling with live electricity.  
Over a domain of asphalt, cement, and concrete  
Rises an empire of glass and brick and steel,  
Houses of commerce, cathedrals of wealth,  
The heights of ambition knowing no limits  
In a drive to excel, a rush to succeed,  
The thrill of risk pursuing unknowns  
Forgetting tradition in a flight up,  
Laughing at the future from rising setbacks,  
From audacious heights at the zenith of the skies.  
Excelsior! Excelsior, O monuments supreme!  
Those who do not understand call you Babel  
But you also are the places of hopes and dreams.

Jennifer Parker

**Picture: Cleansing**  
Anna Kareiva



## Missing You

YOU ARE ABSENT FROM SIGHT;  
YET, I SEE YOU IN EVERYTHING.

Your voice rings . . . rings . . . rings  
-in my ear,  
and FLOODS my mind with sLopPy  
lush melodies.

I am mesmerized  
by your mind, your hypnotic  
thoughts  
control me.

Those two pools of green,  
those that I say are brown,  
are more beautiful

to  
me than  
di am  
o n  
ds.

This passion, this thrill that is put to test by  
distance that, like a gust of wind,  
murders the flame and tries to blow  
me out.

The CRACKling s-t-a-t-i-c  
of the phone's receiver c  
u  
t  
s me at my  
cancer. Your poisonous  
words n u m b my joi  
n  
ts and  
calm my UPTIGHT senses.  
The joy in your heart fills my chamber,  
drowning me in my solitude.  
COULD YOU BE MORE LOVELY?  
IF YOU WERE, COULD I EXIST,  
OR WOULD YOUR PASSION SWALLOW ME WHOLE?

torn

How can i do this?  
how can i EXPOSE this dreadful secret?  
this horrible burning feeling is too CONTAGIOUS to share.  
this feeling, immense in its simplicity,  
lives to die in my mind.  
i must stifle this emotion.

this love is rampant.  
it reeks of stagnant affections, lost.  
curdled inside it has become spoiled and rotten.  
this love is consuming my life and becoming inconvenient.  
how can the smell of it be contained?  
how can i keep it down?

tied up and neglected.  
this emotion has fermented, bittersweet.

the growth has spread and infected my good judgement.  
my immunity ammunitions are of no use in this.  
i have raised up my white handkerchief.  
my heart is pierced.

Christopher Edge



## **Eulogy for Sylvia Plath**

### **The Midnight Knock**

1.

Oh Sylvia, every decade was a death  
You outlasted but a few of the nine  
Trapped in the fabrics of a burlesque world  
Led coughing, by the noose,  
We clapped you into paperbacks  
And watched the iron-booted march  
A silent slide show, with every day  
A black and purple negative  
Sliding from the ceiling down the wall.

2.

Now unslammed doors will hold their breath forever  
The earth slowly unpeeled you like a lime  
Plucked petals of your wedding shroud dismembered,  
Scoring burns upon your wrists of pockmarked grime

3.

Finally the midnight knock was answered  
They found you, dressed in a sticky pallor  
And when moonlight combed the bones  
Of your threadbare grave,  
To touch your copper eyes one final time,  
The dirge of bleeding currents stilled—  
And soft as the gasp of a muted violin string,  
Mouthed one last silent whistle in the dark.

Shelley Romein

## Skyline

Skyscrapers leap from granite  
Shining with a thousand suns  
The buildings beckon  
Excitement calls  
Careless, I languish in the suburbs,  
A freshly paved expressway  
Beside me.

Jennifer Parker

## Andrew's Bald

It's cold up here, much colder than it was when I hopped in my car down in Cade's Cove, almost a vertical mile away. As I get out, I take a moment to enjoy the sensation of being on top of the world. This parking lot is one of the highest in the Eastern United States. People are milling about, knots of them bent over maps and discussing the day's plans. I had made the journey to this high place to get away from people. So get ready to depart from civilization. I pull on my jacket and zip up the front. Then, I recheck my pack - - sandwich, socks, first-aid kit, and poncho. There wasn't any rain in the forecast, but in the Smokies a storm takes only seconds to brew up. I take a deep breath, sling on my pack and canteen, and start down the trail labeled "Andrew's Bald."

After hiking down a rocky trail for a couple hours, I suddenly find myself in what looks like a secluded meadow. In the absence of trees, there is a cool breeze blowing lightly over the shin-high mountain oats and around the occasional rhododendron. The fog, which would appear to people below as a cloud at this height, is drifting lazily about. It probably won't rain here, but I'm sure that the folks down below are looking for their umbrellas.

The grass looks like it was spewed out of the earth in little clumps. My dragging feet stumble into them when I stray off the path. As I walk on, the shallow groove in the earth that served as a trail begins to slowly fade into the grass. Finally, I come to the little sign that I've been walking towards. It's not much, really, just a four foot post painted a forest brown with a square board nailed to it. The board is not important to me. The small, precise, white letters that have been carved into it are. They spell out, "Andrew's Bald"-- beautiful words to a weary hiker.

Now that I know that I'm officially here, I let out a satisfying sigh and begin to amble about, looking for a place to have lunch. As I walk through the soft grass the wind comes up and dries the sweat off my face, leaving me refreshed. The bald slowly curves downward until it hits a wall of fog. I'm a little disappointed because I know that there are wonderful vistas when you can see. The fog has another effect, though. Combined with the curvature of the meadow, the fog creates the appearance of a drop-off into nothingness. It is beautiful,

in its own way, and I savor the view and the breeze before moving on again.

I find a large rock. I take a deep breath through my nose to get all the smells. The scent of water is all about, like thunder and ice, clean and cold. A faint, pale odor of grass is on the air. It's not cut grass that I smell, for this is a natural bald, but that of a little earth and water mixed with a slight scent of fresh-cut vegetables. It's a pleasing blend of smells, and it sets me at ease, just sitting there breathing them in.

My body is not content with just the view and the smell, so I slip off my pack and lay it down with a wet crunch. *Zzzzzzip*. I take out a sandwich. Carefully, though my stomach is very impatient, I remove the Saran-wrap covering from this precious store. It's one of my favorites and greatly to be prized for its rarity—a thinly sliced ham and cheese sandwich on REAL fat-laden white bread and REAL deadly mayonnaise—not like the slimy, wimpy, diet stuff that my parents always buy.

Now my mind begins to wander, like the wind, flowing in one direction and suddenly driving off into another, sometimes thick and swift, and sometimes light and carefree. It's a good place to think. The border of forest, the wall of fog, the great height, and even the yellow green of the mountain oats weaving about with the wind combine to create a sense of separation, of total freedom from the constraints of ordinary, everyday life. I'm just sitting there, thinking and looking off into nothingness, when I hear a soft roll of thunder.

In the Smokies, thunder bounces from mountain to mountain until it sounds like a jet is flying over. It's easy to be fooled unless you know, like I do, that it is illegal for jets to cross the Smokies. The rangers wish to preserve the sweet serenity created by the silence and stillness that nature allows. I think that that is one of the main reasons why man goes into the wilderness--to get away from the constant assault of noise. Nothing is more calming or soothing than sitting in a wild silence.

The sandwich eaten and a few swigs of lime Gatorade taken from my canteen, I prepare to leave this bald, one of two still maintained by the park service. Another loud round of thunder quickens my preparations, and my pack is zipped up and canteen put on. One last look do I take around this quiet fortress of silence, this wild place of healing, before I turn my back and set off down the trail.

David Hunter

## Bugs

*"All the world a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight."*  
--Thomas Gray

Apocalypse is perhaps the  
easiest way out for us and the  
nicest end for them--for the bugs.  
"Picture the aftermath," you told me,  
so I did, but in a dream.  
Arthropods emerged from the  
ricket and reel of shockwave,  
some capsized onto crunchy backs  
spinning with six legs ever creeping,  
oblivious to fallout,  
others burrowing, pupating, procreating, feeding.  
In their world,  
stoplights keep odd stilted time with  
rhythms lapsing electromagnetic, simply properties  
of light, no loaded symbols,  
no anxious receptors prowling the  
expanses of asphalt, pot-holed inconsequence.  
Only they have made it out alive,  
all poisoned yellow oranges blacks  
all shinings and thumpings against  
remnant streetlights, arched, forked  
highway bulbs, from one narrow stem forming the  
steely profiles of mantis heads. . .  
Blasted houses gape once hidden scuttlings  
and underneath chunks of sheetrock and  
slabs of vinyl siding,

many legs are scrabbling.  
Roving swarms light here and there--  
bees and beetles blight the sky and  
scale the stone lions outside public libraries and  
custom houses.  
Jeweled green and translucent wing  
cloud the eyes of  
pock marked statuary and  
the screeches, whizzes, buzzes  
clicks and clacks and chirrups  
hisses scutterings flappings whirrings  
Every crispy mechanical frictional  
buggism would prove quite unbearable but  
the dead,  
their ears stopped with deep-dirt dwellers and  
pale-bodied crawlers,  
lay comfortably still.  
They merely twitch when fluxes of termites  
displace the earth.  
I wriggle myself out of a cocoon of  
uneasy sleep and I'm thinking of all this  
because I wanted the white stationery  
stamped with the gold beetle.  
All of this because you told me, after watching  
the Discovery Channel, that Arthropoda  
would politely assert its evolutionary superiority,  
establishing dominance and picking up  
where we left off, though somewhat more  
expediently than we warm fuzzy things  
have ever managed in the past.

Amanda Ash

## Daydreamer

This day rambles and flows through the open gate, teasing the keeper by escaping into freedom and once again returning to captivity.

Dreams flash across the turtle shells and reflect back as incoherent and jagged. They stretch out to the outermost extremities

and crushes appear as love, twenty feet tall. Fat flattens from flab into muscle that stands at attention when flexed.

My hair blows over my face and exposes a fertile young coat-rack that leans for me to catch her and to release her through sex.

Do I battle my shadows or conjure some mystical power that vanquishes all evil? I swash-buckle my belt and slash

the air with my brown blooded sword that snaps and falls limp with each pause. I run and I am fast.

I jump and I fly into rage, spurning good fortune. I see everything that happens and the world speaks to me.

Can this broken picture be true to my mind? Am I this hero? Could I be this superman and still have my dreams?

Christopher Edge









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